United Nations CEDAW/C/BGD/Q/8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
16 March 2016

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-fifth session
24 October-18 November 2016
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues in relation to the eighth periodic report of Bangladesh

General

1. In its eighth periodic report, the State party acknowledges that a limitation of its report was the lack of updated national data and that updated figures were not available (para. 9).[1] It is also indicated that the State party agreed on the collection and compilation of a minimum set of gender indicators, in line with the guidelines of the Statistical Commission of 2013 (para. 172). Please provide updated information on the current status of this initiative and information on the establishment of a national-level database using gender statistical basic indicators.

Constitutional and legislative framework

2. The State party acknowledges that personal laws for Muslims, Hindus and Christians contain discriminatory provisions with regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship (para. 23). Please provide updated information on the measures taken to revise those discriminatory provisions and on the steps taken to harmonize the legal system of the State party with international human rights standards and, in particular, with the provisions of the Convention.

Reservations

3. The State party indicates that the Law Commission has submitted its recommendation on the merit of withdrawing the reservation on article 16(1) (c) of the Convention, which is under consideration (para. 161). Please provide updated

Note: The present document is being issued in English, French and Spanish only.

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the eighth periodic report of the State party.

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information on the current status of this recommendation and information on further efforts by the State party to review its reservations to the Convention, with a view to withdrawing them and/or narrowing their scope. Please also indicate whether the State party has studied the experience and best practices of other countries with similar sociocultural, religious and legal systems that have succeeded in withdrawing and/or considerably narrowing their reservations to the Convention.

National machinery for the advancement of women

4. It is indicated that the technical capacity of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, which is chaired by a State minister, is too weak to effectively coordinate women's development and that the resources of the Ministry and its capacity to provide support to other ministries are limited (para. 113). Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that the Ministry has adequate human, financial and technical resources and decision-making authority to work effectively for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality at all levels. Please also provide information on the cooperation of the Ministry with civil society on the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality in the State party.

Temporary special measures

5. Please provide specific examples of the use of temporary special measures during the reporting period, their inclusion in national policies and programmes and their concrete implementation to promote and accelerate the realization of substantive equality between women and men, in line with article 4(1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on the subject.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

6. It is acknowledged that women in the State party still cannot enjoy their rights under existing laws owing to the lack of awareness, lack of enforcement, and persistence of patriarchal attitudes, which leads to women's exclusion (para. 25). However, little information is provided on the prevalence and impact of such negative stereotypes and on the measures taken by the State party to eliminate the stereotypes that underpin traditional patriarchal attitudes and reinforce women's subordination in society. Please provide updated information on the efforts undertaken, through awareness-raising and educational campaigns addressing religious and community leaders, parents and teachers, to counter stereotypical attitudes towards women and girls, including those who experience multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of their age, disability, ethnicity or other characteristics.

7. The State party indicates that it committed itself to developing a plan of action by 2014 to end child marriage and revising the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) by 2015 (para. 29). It is also indicated that a draft action plan to prevent child marriage was drafted in December 2014 and prepared for consultation (para. 26). Please provide updated information on the current status and content of the action plan and on measures taken to revise the Act.

Violence against women

8. The State party acknowledges that women are generally reluctant to report cases of violence because of fear of social stigma and the traditional mindset of law enforcement agents (para. 36). It also indicates that there are not enough shelters provided by the State party and that there is a lack of legal support for victims. Please provide information on steps taken to remove obstacles to reporting cases of violence against women and on measures taken to provide training to law enforcement agencies. Please also provide updated information on the number of shelters run by the State and non-governmental organizations for victims of violence against women in all regions and on measures taken to ensure that all women have access to justice, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on the subject.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

9. The State party indicates that there is a gap in its legislation on prostitution, that women involved in prostitution are often subjected to harassment and violence by the police and that their rights are often denied in practice (para. 126). Please provide updated information on measures taken to adopt specific legal measures to close the gap in the legislation on prostitution and protect women in prostitution, as well as information on the prevalence of the phenomenon in the State party and measures taken to prevent the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Please also describe existing mechanisms to reduce the demand for prostitution and to support women who wish to leave prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

10. It is indicated that only eight women in the foreign service are heading missions abroad, out of 68 missions, and only three of them are ambassadors (para. 49). It is also acknowledged that there are many obstacles to women participating in political and public life (para. 50). Please provide updated information on specific measures, including temporary special measures, such as quotas, in Parliament and the judiciary and among professors at the university level, that have been taken to improve the representation of women in the political and public spheres and in decision-making positions. Please also indicate whether those measures include campaigns to raise awareness of the importance for society as a whole of the participation of women in decision-making, including in companies in the private sector, and mechanisms for monitoring the impact of those measures.

Nationality

11. The State party indicates that a woman's right to pass her citizenship on to her foreign spouse was under consideration (para. 51). Please provide updated information on the current legislative provisions in that area, in line with article 9 of the Convention.

Education

12. The State party indicates that the High Court has directed all educational institutions to formulate a policy against sexual harassment and to establish a complaint committee and complaint box (para. 58). The State party also acknowledges many challenges in the area of education, such as the low participation of women in

technical and tertiary education, the fact that women are dropping out, the insufficient number of women teachers and women in school management, women's low interest in science studies and the slow growth in adult literacy rates (para. 61). Please provide information on the current status and content of the policy against sexual harassment in educational institutions. Please also provide updated information on measures taken to address the remaining challenges in the area of education.

Employment

13. The State party acknowledges that a gender pay gap exists and that women receive on average two thirds of the pay that men receive, that there are gender differences in terms of wage rates in the private sector and that small and microsized enterprises are run informally (paras. 148 and 64). It is also acknowledged that the Government's capacity and resources to monitor those practices are very limited. It is further indicated that minimum wages in agriculture, the largest employment sector, could not be ascertained and that women are concentrated in low-paid jobs owing to their limited educational background (para. 64). Please provide information on measures taken to address the horizontal and vertical segregation of men and women in the labour market. Please provide information on legislative measures taken to harmonize national legislation on the public and private sectors, including small and microsized enterprises, as well as on measures taken to establish a complaint mechanism of which women can avail themselves and measures to introduce sanctions that can be applied to employers who discriminate against women and violate their rights.

14. It is indicated that maternity leave has been increased to six months for women working in the public sector and can be granted twice in the working life of a woman (para. 120). It is also acknowledged that maternity leave is not guaranteed for all women in the private sector and that day-care centres for working women are inadequate. Please provide information on measures taken to amend the national legislation to provide maternity leave in the private sector and to guarantee maternity leave in both the public and the private sectors for every woman giving birth. Please also provide information on measures taken to increase the number of childcare facilities to allow women to reconcile work and family life.

Health

15. The State party acknowledges that one of the major challenges in the area of health is child pregnancy, given that about 50 per cent of all females from 15 to 19 years of age are married, of whom 33 per cent are already mothers and 6 per cent are pregnant (para. 72). The report also indicates that there are regional disparities in the use of modern contraceptives (para. 70). It further indicates (para. 69) that iron-deficiency anaemia during pregnancy is a problem. Please provide updated information on measures taken to improve the overall status of the health of women and girls, in particular with regard to reducing malnutrition and anaemia, and on programmes developed to provide women and girls with access to adequate and affordable health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health care, in all regions.

16. According to information before the Committee, abortion is criminalized in the State party in all cases except to save a woman's life. There is an exemption for "menstrual regulation", but that procedure is not yet widely available, which causes

high rates of maternal mortality because women and girls resort to unsafe abortions. Please provide updated information on the national legislation with regard to abortion and whether abortion is authorized in cases of rape, incest or serious malformation of the fetus, on the training provided to health-services providers and on measures taken to address stigma and discrimination targeted against women living with sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and the treatment available to those women. Please also provide information on measures taken by the State party to prevent the mother-to-child transmission of HIV and to ensure the effective access of HIV-infected women and girls to medical services and the steps taken to protect them from discrimination, violence and stigmatization.

Rural women

17. It is acknowledged that there are obstacles to providing all required support to rural women as a result of limited resources and the impacts of climate change (para. 85). The report indicates that the State party developed a National Climate Change Action Plan in which women are included in efforts for the adaptation and mitigation of climate change (para. 103). Please provide updated information on the outcomes of this Action Plan and on whether the gender perspective has been incorporated into risk reduction strategies. Please also indicate the measures taken to ensure the equal participation of women, in particular rural women, at the decision-making level of climate change and natural disaster management, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women.

Disadvantaged groups of women

18. The State party indicates that women with disabilities experience difficulties with regard to their access to education, health services and employment and that they are subjected to social stigma and gender-based violence (para. 95). It is also acknowledged that there is discrimination against indigenous women, women migrant workers, women in detention and women living with HIV/AIDS. Please provide updated information on measures taken to ensure that women belonging to disadvantaged groups are not subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and have access to education, health services, employment and housing and are protected from social stigma and violence. Please also provide information on how the State party incorporates the specific needs of disadvantaged groups of women and girls into policies and programmes aimed at the advancement and protection of women's rights in all areas covered by the Convention.

19. The State party indicates that the Rohingya refugee women living in the two United Nations refugee camps in Cox's Bazar are provided with limited support (para. 94). Please provide information on any recent legislative, administrative or other measures taken to better apply a gender-sensitive approach with regard to women refugees and asylum-seeking women, as well as on their implementation. Please also provide information on the current living conditions of refugee and asylum-seeking women inside and outside the camps, in particular in relation to housing, food security, protection against violence and access to justice, as well as on their access to health services, education and employment.

Marriage and family relations

20. It is indicated that notwithstanding the legal provisions stipulating that women enjoy equal rights in terms of mobility, choice of residence and domicile, in practice these elements are determined by social norms and women depend on the choices of the male members of the family (para. 159). It is also acknowledged that there is inequality in personal laws and that the adoption of a general civil code is difficult because of the persistence of deep-rooted gender stereotypes in society (paras. 159 and 97). Please indicate measures taken to address de facto discrimination against women with regard to mobility, choice of residence, inheritance, divorce and the custody of children.